I 010

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California High-Speed Rail Authority
EIR/EIS Comment
8/28/07, Oakland City Hall

My name is William Blackwell.

As an East Bay resident, I favor an Altamont Pass alignment for the Bay Area to Central Valley link. However, every alternate in the draft EIR/EIS assumes lightweight trains built for speeds up to 220-mph. There is no alternate for somewhat slower but still very fast 125-mph trains. I010-1 I010-2

In fact, train speed on the Caltrain corridor between San Jose and San Francisco — and through other heavily populated areas — is limited to 125-mph because of noise considerations. 125-mph trains are quieter, and they are also heavier (and thus better able to resist high winds), have a shorter turning radius, use less power, typically require shorter station platforms, have less stringent track construction standards, and lower-cost train sets, and, most importantly for the Altamont Pass, can use tilt technology.

All of these features have favorable environmental impacts when compared to the alternative.

Just recently, 125-mph tilting trains were chosen to upgrade an existing 400-mile line over winding, hilly terrain in England because the tilt technology enabled the train to round corners while maintaining high speed. Studies showed there would be no significant loss in ridership, and that has proved to be the case.

Speeds up to 125-mph would provide (1) the vital express links between San Francisco and San Jose, and between the Bay Area and the Central Valley high-speed rail line, and (2) the frequency of service needed for intercity connectivity and Bay Area commuter trips. It is less costly (which means lower fares and even more ridership), and can its self be upgraded in the future.

In effect, I propose simply upgrading the existing Caltrain and ACE lines to a 125-mph level of service for both commuters and end-to-end riders. In the interest of a viable statewide system, I ask that this option be given due consideration in the EIR/EIS. I010-3

Copy: Quentin Kopp, Susan Sward, Jerry Hill, and Robert Doty